CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
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B300 Williamson's Sapsucker Sphyrapicus thyroideus
Family: Picidae Order: Piciformes Class: Aves

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Uncommon to fairly common, summer resident in coniferous forests at about 1700-2900 m (5500-9500 ft) from the Siskiyou and Trinity Mts., Siskiyou and Trinity cos. and the Warner Mts., Modoc Co., south through the Cascade-Sierra Nevada to the San Gabriel, San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mts. of southern California. Preferred nesting habitat is lodgepole pine, but also nests in aspens adjacent to stands of red fir, Jeffrey pine, and eastside pine habitats (Crockett and Hadow 1975). Winter status unclear. Some individuals resident in breeding habitat, but many (most?) descend into ponderosa pine and other coniferous habitats at lower elevations (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Gaines 1977b, Garrett and Dunn 1981). Sexes may occupy largely separate habitats in winter (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Drills horizontal rows of holes in lodgepole and other conifers, from which it drinks sap and eats cambium and other soft tissues. Gleans ants and other insects from trunks and, to a lesser extent, drills for wood-boring insects. Ants may comprise up to 86% of animal food, and dominate foods fed to young. May eat berries in winter (Bent 1939, Crockett 1975).

Cover: Requires snags or live trees with rotted heartwood in which to excavate nesting and roosting cavities.

Reproduction: Nesting cavity excavated at height of 1.5 to 19 m (5-60 ft); at average of 11 m (36 ft) at Sagehen Creek in Sierra Co. (Raphael and White 1984). May nest in same tree for several years.

Water: No data found.

Pattern: Most numerous in conifer forest with large trees, sparse to moderate canopy cover, aspens, and suitable snags for nest excavation.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: May move downslope or wander in winter.

Home Range: Apparently same as territory. In Colorado, Stallcup (1968) found a breeding density of 2.2-8.2 per 40 ha (100 ac).

Territory: In Colorado, Crockett (1975) found average territory of 6.8 ha (16.9 ac), range

4.1-9.1 ha (10-22.5 ac).

Reproduction: Peak of egg laying late May to mid-July. Monogamous. Incubation 12-14 days, by both sexes. Clutch averages 5-6 eggs (range 3-7). Sometimes double-brooded. Both sexes tend altricial young. Fledging age 28-35 days (Crockett and Hansley 1977).

Niche: May be interspecifically territorial to other sapsucker species.

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